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Central Florida Future, Vol. 13 No. 15, December 10, 1980

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Recommended Citation

"Central Florida Future, Vol. 13 No. 15, December 10, 1980" (1980). *Central Florida Future*. 416.
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SPECIAL EDITION



Future

University of
Central Florida

Volume 13

Wednesday, December 10, 1980

No. 15

Senate investigates grade change

by Frank Forester

Editor-in-Chief

The UCF administration and Faculty Senate have launched separate investigations into the circumstances and ethics of changing an athlete's grades.

The Faculty Senate is forming an ad hoc committee to investigate the current situation and check for past similar occurrences. The committee will also make recommendations on how to prevent future problems and assign blame for the June incident.

"The senate ought to investigate it," said Dr. Leslie Ellis, vice-president for academic affairs. "We admitted we did not investigate it as thoroughly as we should," he said.

The athlete said that even if he became ineligible to play basketball he would stay in school and pursue his degree. "I came to school to get an education," he said.

The investigations were prompted by then assistant basketball coach Ray Ridenour's request that a player be withdrawn from two classes after the quarter had ended.

The grade change was authorized by Dr. John Bolte, associate vice-president for academic affairs, without the knowledge of the student or the two instructors.

Both spring quarter grades were changed from "D"s to "W"s by a memo initialed by Bolte and dated June 26.

Bolte and Ridenour said they did not know the student had completed the course.

Ellis said he decided last week to change the grades back to "D"s because "we obviously made an error. We did not know the student had taken the final exam."

The administration is also investigating the player's grades and courses from the summer quarter to determine if there were any additional improprieties, Ellis said.

Ellis said he did not know if the National Collegiate Athletic Association was investigating the incident.

NCAA rules enforcement representative Tom Yeager said it could be a rules violation and "it sure doesn't sound on the up and up."

The policy of the athletic department is not to try to influence students' grades, said Dr. Trevor Colbourn, UCF president.

He said Ridenour had been previously warned to stop such activity by athletic director Dr. Jack O'Leary.

Ellis said he did not know how often coaches contacted professors.

If he was still working at UCF this incident "would be grounds for dismissal of Ridenour," said Ellis. Ridenour is now head basketball coach

at Daytona Beach Community College.

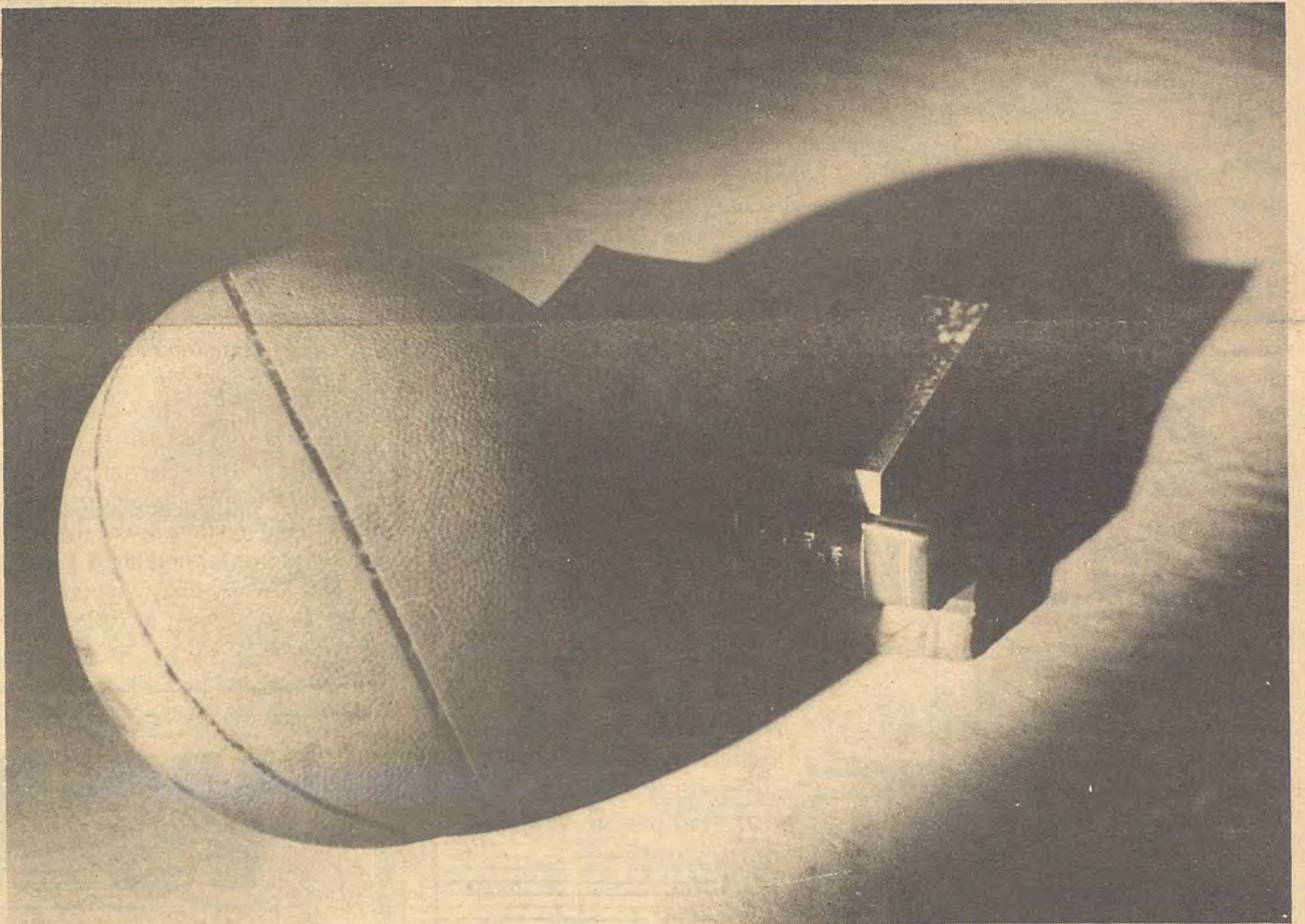
Ridenour misrepresented facts to Bolte, said Colbourn.

Colbourn said the student would not have been able to register for summer classes if he had received "D"s in the two classes during the spring, but since he completed the summer courses in

good faith and made "A"s he would be able to remain in school.

The athlete said that even if he became ineligible to play basketball he would stay in school and pursue his degree. "I came to school to get an education," he said.

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A question of books or basketball

Kevin Mason/Future

Coach explains job as 'academic adviser'

Laura Hoffman

Sports Editor

Former UCF assistant basketball coach Ray Ridenour is the man who said an athlete's grade change "should get back to an individual faculty member so he can concur or not concur." He is the same man whose efforts resulted in a player's grade being changed from a "D" to a "W" without the professor's knowledge.

Ridenour argues that he never actually sought a "grade change," that he only wanted to persuade Dr. John Bolte of academic affairs to arrange a withdrawal after deadline for an athlete who failed to withdraw himself. Both Ridenour and Bolte said they would not have pursued the withdrawal from two classes if they had known the

athlete had already received "D"s in the courses. The withdrawal request was initiated two weeks after Spring classes had ended - within five days of Ridenour's request, according to Bolte.

The head coach "let me handle the nuts and bolts of the operation of players' academic affairs, which is one of the reasons I was hired."

—Ridenour

The professor who discovered the grade had been changed from a "D" to a "W" had once been approached by Ridenour, but had refused to approve the student's dropping the course a week before the final exam.

"He was very aggressive about not letting (the student) do anything," Ridenour recalled. "Immediately I knew he had to be out of this class..."

Ridenour stepped in to do what he saw as his job. He said head basketball coach Torchy Clark let him "handle the nuts and bolts of the operation of players' academic affairs which is one of the reasons I was hired."

"The players don't have the best academic backgrounds," he said. "They listen to me about what to take and what not to take and how many hours."

Ridenour said he was proud of getting so many black players through a predominantly white school. He compared himself to a concerned parent,

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Ridenour

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saying he had recruited some of these guys and "wanted to make sure they got a college education."

"You're in some kind of fantasyland if you think some of these guys are going to get a degree," Ridenour said. He explained that his job was to make sure the player retains his eligibility and has a "good academic experien-

one's competence.

Ridenour added that he was really proud of what the player did this summer by earning three "A"s. "He certainly is an individual deserving to be in there 'cause he worked his butt off."

"I feel that this is happening when the team is down. One team can only be cursed so much," Ridenour said. "In a lot of places there's a lot of

"if there's going to be a damn expose, let's see what the football players were taking ... Maybe the whole house is screwed up"

—Ridenour

ce."

"Rather than being self-advised, I agonized over those guys and what they were taking and what their grade point average was and what they were getting out of it," he said. "If we're going to give scholarship money for guys to go to classes, then they sure as hell better get their asses to class. I was the one who made sure that occurred."

The coach said when he withdrew the student he "didn't know what the player's grade was." He felt, however, that "he shouldn't have been in either class because he could not understand the work."

He said the class was a history course the player had no business taking. The team manager was in the same class and found it was "way too hard," Ridenour recalled.

He said he didn't trust his player to withdraw from class himself, adding, "I would let my sharper players do it themselves," but he wasn't sure of this

wheeling and dealing," but not in this particular case.

"Goddamn football, they had a bunch of idiots and nobody was taking anything and everybody was flunking out. So, I mean, before they jump any way and shape on basketball, if there's going to be a damn expose, let's see what the football players were taking. Let's see how they got in school, and let's see how many of the football players are going to graduate. Maybe the whole house is screwed up and we're going to throw stones at everybody. I knew the advisement the football players were getting and it was horseshit."

"I'm anxious to see what happens and I hope everything gets cleared up. I hope the thing that is really good that could come out of it is the person left out of the loop" on grade changes - the faculty member, should "sure as hell be brought into that," said Ridenour.



Coach Ray Ridenour

Frank Forester/Future

Games coaches play nationwide

The recent grade changing incident at UCF has raised several questions concerning the ethics of college athletics in general.

According to a Sept. 22 article in Newsweek magazine, the cancer of athletic improprieties at the college level has reached epidemic proportions.

Half the members of the Pacific 10 football conference have been ruled out of bounds to host their own Rose Bowl. They were caught altering academic transcripts and granting fake credits to athletes. Among those penalized were the PAC 10 powerhouses of USC and UCLA.

Arizona State football players were caught receiving credit for unattended off campus "extension courses." Grade forgeries also wrecked the University of New Mexico's basketball team.

"The cheating started in elementary school," said former New Mexico football star Bruce Herron, now a Chicago Bears linebacker. "By the time I was a high school sophomore, I was taking a test and the teacher came over and offered me the answer sheet. That was the first time I realized I could get everything for nothing."

"This is worse than Watergate," said Digger Phelps, basketball coach at Notre Dame. "A lot of college presidents should be wondering what's in their closets."

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OPINION

Grade tampering unfair to students and athlete

Almost everyone knows that college sports are not just for fun and entertainment. Sports are important to schools in terms of prestige, attracting students and raising money.

This over-emphasis on athletics sometimes causes mistakes to be made. Such schools as UCLA, Arizona State and Oregon are now ineligible for conference championships because of mistakes such as recruiting violations and grade tampering.

A former UCF basketball coach and at least one administrator have made some mistakes here that hopefully will be corrected without the repercussions suffered by some other schools.

Former assistant coach Ray Ridenour told one of his players that he would drop a class for him. He thought the athlete was too stupid to do it himself. Then, instead of taking care of the withdrawal, Ridenour waited until the quarter was almost over and then asked the professor to give the player an "I", so he could remain eligible to play ball, instead of the "D" he earned.

When the professor refused, Ridenour went to Associate Vice-President for Academic Affairs Dr. John Bolte to see if he could get the student withdrawn from that class and another one the student was making a "D" in.

Bolte claims he did not know he was changing a grade for a class that had been completed. He said he would not do such a thing. According to Bolte he was just approving a withdrawal action that was late due to the coaches mistake.

One of the problems with this story

is that Bolte initialed the form which plainly said to change "D's" to "W's" two weeks after the quarter was over. He did not seem to notice that the student had received a passing final grade in the class. He did not bother to even notify, let alone check with, the professor involved.

Bolte's apparent failure to pay attention to what he was doing combined with Ridenour's willingness to take improper steps to maintain a players eligibility have resulted in a much needed review of UCF's athletics versus academics environment.

The circumstances that led to this grade change cannot be allowed to continue. This incident is unfair to everyone involved, and the entire university community is involved.

It is unfair to the students who do not get their "D's" changed by their advisers. It is unfair to the professors who try to treat their students fairly and see that they get the grades they deserve.

Most of all it is unfair to the player who had his grades changed. He was being used by a coach who was far more concerned with keeping a good player on the court for another season than with that same player's college education.

This coach, while admitting he made a mistake by not getting the student withdrawn sooner, made it clear that he did not think this student was smart enough to withdraw from the class by himself.

UCF is lucky Ridenour has moved to Daytona Beach Community College (pity DBCC) so our school is no longer contaminated by his racist opinions.

He accused black athletes of having inflated ideas about what they could do academically. He had a recruiting policy of getting the best players, then hoping they were smart enough to stay in school.

For the athlete involved in this sad story, basketball is just a way to help offset the costs of a college education. He was trying so hard to do well in school that he continued to do the course work, even after he thought he had been withdrawn, hoping to make a good grade when he signed up for the course the second time.

His biggest mistake was to put too much trust in a coach who views

academics as an obstacle to basketball.

Both the Faculty Senate and the administration should be encouraged to clear up this incident, identify any wrongdoers and set up procedures to prevent this abuse from every happening again.

Only by thorough investigation and full, open disclosure of the facts gathered can this university hope to make up for the injustices done by its employees.

Frank T. Forester
Editor-in-Chief

Y'KNOW, THIS 'EDUCATION' STUFF HAS REALLY RUINED COLLEGE FOR ME!



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Mailing address: P.O. Box 25000, Orlando, Florida 32816 Editorial office phone: 275-2601. Business office phone: 275-2865.

This public document was promulgated at an annual cost of \$78,893 or 6.7 cents per copy to inform the university community. Annual advertising revenue of \$56,893 defray 72 percent of the annual cost. The Future is funded through the Activity and Service Fee as allocated by the Student Government of the University of Central Florida.

In Tribute

John Lennon was probably the most pervasive force in modern music. For many of us there had always been and will always be a John Lennon.

His gifts to us were so incalculable that it is only with his loss that we are becoming aware of how deeply he touched our lives.

His genius created a phenomenon that will never be equalled.

The superlative "legend" has been so overused that when someone worthy of the name dies, our language fails us. Therefore we will rely on his,

*"Some say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us
And the world will live as one."
from the song "Imagine"*

Investigation

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Colbourn also said, "Grade changes should not take place without the knowledge of the instructor of record."

The Faculty Senate "wants to make sure nothing like this ever happens again," said Dr. Ida Cook, senate chairman.

"We're not on a witch hunt. We're not out to get anybody," she said.

"They (the administration) obviously feel they've done something wrong. They have several explanations," Cook said.

She said members of the faculty do not want to be second guessed by the administration and grades should not be changed without first consulting the instructors.

The administration is seen as "responsive" to the faculty, she said.

Colbourn said the administration

"I'd like to say thank you on behalf of the group and myself and I hope we passed the audition."

J. Lennon (1940-1980)

was developing a clear policy that would allow for no grade changes without the instructors' permission. Responsibility for administering withdrawals is being shifted to the Office of Undergraduate Studies, he said.

No coach should be allowed to influence an instructor, Colbourn said.

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